

***In the year 2035, St. Croix County is an economically vibrant, scenic, clean, healthy and safe place to live, work, and prosper.***

*It is a place that recognizes its history and agricultural heritage. St. Croix County has committed to maintaining a high quality of life for its residents through education, viable economic opportunities that include agricultural services and manufacturing. There are plenty of recreational opportunities, a full complement of natural resources, and efficient and affective transportation.*

*The county and towns allow development with minimal impact on the overall land use by focusing development along multi-modal transportation corridors that maximize mobility, connectivity, livability, and economic development throughout the county.*

*Each of its vibrant cities and villages has maintained its small town charm and are proud of their heritage and many community events. The cities and villages cooperate to provide municipal services to the citizens and they use tools, such as cooperative boundary and service agreements to save operating expenses.*

## County Vision

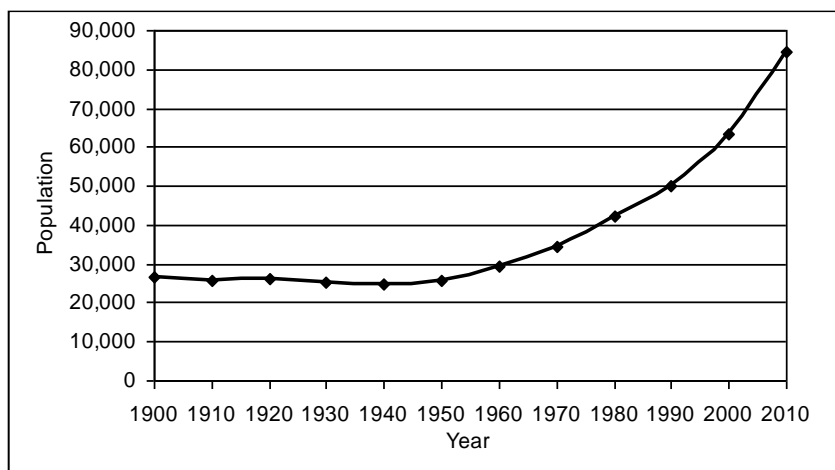
The vision statement above was developed from the Visioning Workshops that were held as part of the public participation plan for St. Croix County. Numerous residents and elected officials from around the county worked together to develop an overall vision to guide St. Croix County's future. The vision was further refined by the Community Development Committee, and used throughout development of this plan. In addition, a more detailed vision statement was crafted for each element of the plan. These are provided at the beginning of each element section in both volumes 1 and 2.

## County Forecasts Summary

### Population

Between 1900 and 1950, St. Croix County's population remained fairly steady, with small declines in the decades of the 1900s, 1920s and 1930s, and small increases in the decades of the 1910s and 1940s. In the decades between 1940 and 1980, the county's population increased at an accelerating rate, ultimately resulting in the county's second highest growth decade in the 1970s (26%). The population growth rate declined somewhat in the 1980s (16.2%) only to have the 1990s (25.7%) almost

**Figure 1.1 St. Croix County Historical Population 1900 to 2010**



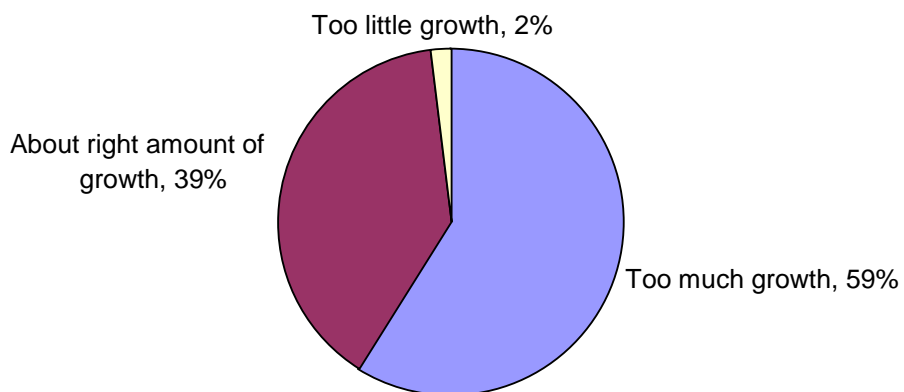
source: U.S. Census Bureau; Wisconsin Department of Administration

match the growth of the 1970s. Recently between 2000 and 2010, the County's population increased by 21,190 people, or 33.6 percent.

Since 1970, St. Croix County has experienced some of the fastest population growth in the state; however, being part of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area it is clear its future is linked to the vitality of the area. Since 1960, there has been an explosion of rural non-farm residents. Indeed, amongst the rural population there has been a transformation from a largely farm population to a rural non-farm population. Since 1960 St. Croix County has seen fairly constant natural increase in population with two periods where in-migration exceeded natural increase (1970-1980 and 1990-2000). It is clear that the national trend of an aging population is reflected in St. Croix County. Large numbers of people will be achieving retirement age over the next 20 years. While the St. Croix County population will be aging, it will also be changing its racial and ethnic characteristics. The County's Asian and Hispanic populations can be expected to continue to increase significantly.

One of the questions in the 2008 public opinion survey asked for respondent's opinions about the recent rate of population growth in St. Croix County. As shown in Figure 1.2, a majority (59%) said the County's 26 percent population growth between the years 2000 and 2008 was too much. About four in ten said that rate was about right, while two percent would like to see more growth. This concern was reflected in the open-ended question at the end of survey that asked respondents to list one thing they would like to change about the County; a desire for less growth and development was second only to reduction of property taxes.

**Figure 1.2 - Opinions About Recent Population Growth**



Source: St. Croix County Comprehensive Planning Public Opinion Survey Report Results, 2008

## Housing

The Wisconsin Department of Administration's population projections indicate a 117.5 percent increase in St. Croix County's population (about 58,000 more residents) from 2000 to 2030. In addition, the U.S. Census Bureau's housing projections predict that St. Croix County will have a total of 55,944 housing units by the year 2030, a 131 percent increase from 2000. This is an increase of 31,681 housing units, or approximately 1,056 housing units per year. The most recent population projections for St. Croix County are based on the 2000 census and population estimates from 2001-2005. They do not take into account the downturn in the economy and the housing foreclosure crisis of the second half of the decade. As such the projections reported in this plan are probably too aggressive. Revised projections will not become available soon enough to be utilized in this plan.

In the Survey, St. Croix County respondents were asked if additional units of assorted types of housing are needed in St. Croix County. As shown in Figure 1.3, St. Croix County residents expressed differing opinions about the need for various housing types. More than half of

respondents agreed or strongly agreed there is a need for more senior housing, single family housing, and affordable housing in St. Croix County. Support was particularly strong for senior housing (72%), followed by single family housing (66%).

**FIGURE 1.3 - ADDITIONAL HOUSING NEEDS IN ST. CROIX COUNTY**

	Count	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Senior housing	486	19%	53%	9%	2%	17%
Single family housing	479	16%	50%	18%	6%	10%
Affordable housing	486	16%	36%	25%	11%	11%
Housing subdivisions	481	3%	25%	39%	21%	12%
Duplexes (2 units)	480	3%	22%	44%	15%	15%
Condominiums, apartments	483	3%	18%	47%	18%	14%
Seasonal and recreational homes	480	1%	17%	42%	21%	20%
Mobile home parks	489	2%	7%	35%	47%	9%
Freestanding mobile homes	486	1%	6%	41%	45%	7%

Source: *St. Croix County Comprehensive Planning Public Opinion Survey Report Results, 2008*

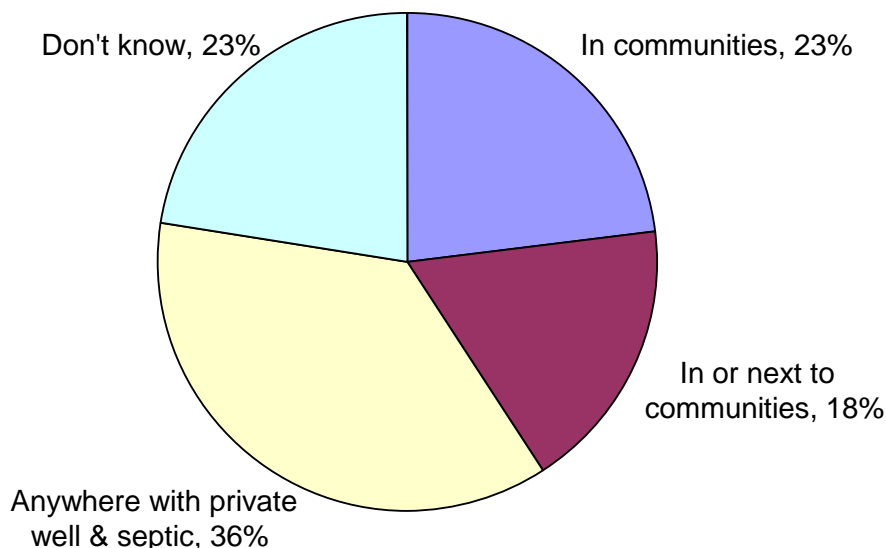
Among the demographic groups:

- Support for senior housing was stronger among long-term residents, retirees, households without children, and households with annual income under \$50,000.
- Renters were more likely to say there is a need for more duplex units and affordable housing.
- Residents of the western portion of the County were less likely to see a need for additional condos/apartments and were more strongly opposed to mobile homes and mobile home parks.

St. Croix County residents had split opinions regarding whether they prefer new housing to be built in or near existing communities where public water and sewer is available or could be made available. As shown in Figure 1.4, about four in 10 said they favor focusing new home developments in such locations. Nearly as many (36%) said homes could be built anywhere in the County where a well and private onsite sewage treatment (e.g., septic system) could be sited. Nearly a quarter of respondents said they “don’t know.”

Women were much more likely to have responded “don’t know” to this question.

**Figure 1.4 - Location of New Residential Development**



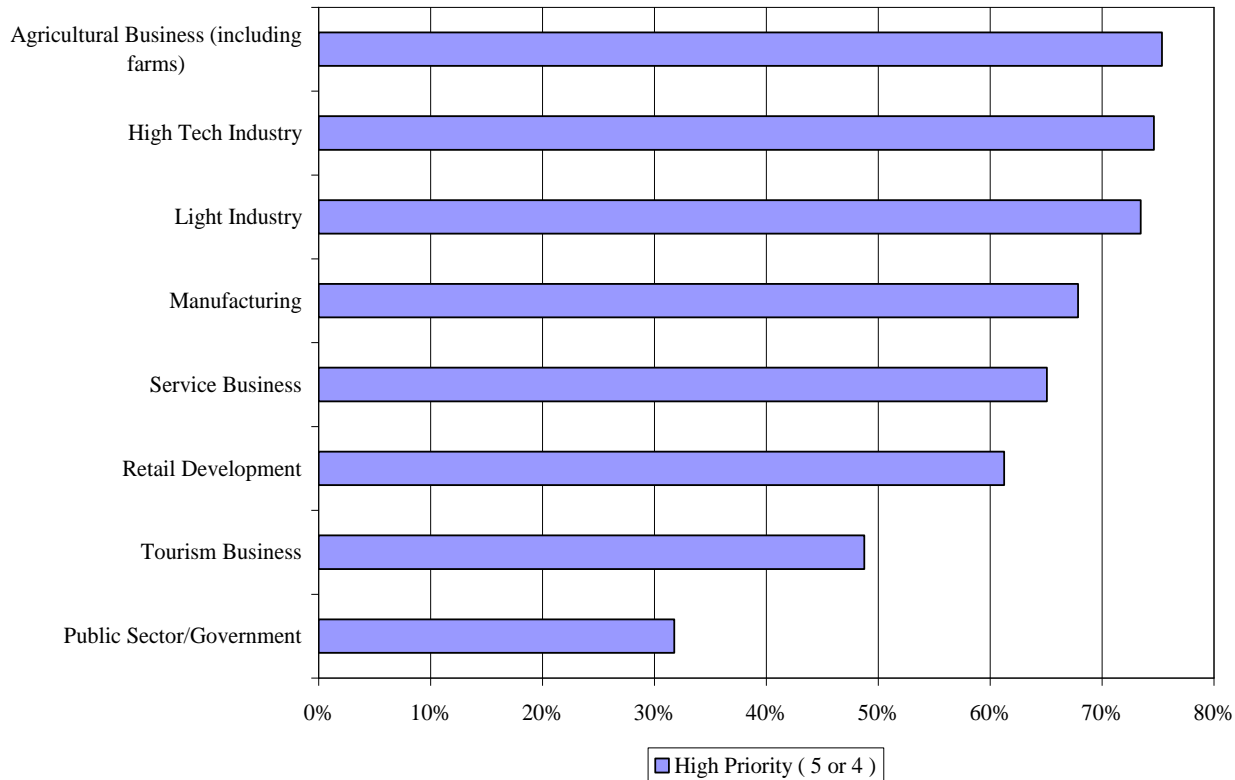
Source: *St. Croix County Comprehensive Planning Public Opinion Survey Report Results, 2008*

## Economic Development

While the segment of the population eligible for the labor force in St. Croix County grew by nearly 30 percent between 1990 and 2000, the actual number in the labor force increased by 33.8 percent. The employed residents in the labor force increased by 35.8 percent over the same period, while the percentage of unemployed residents decreased by one and a half percentage points. Based on these statistics, it appears that a growing number of County residents had been finding employment opportunities in the 1990s. The economic downturn early in the decade starting in 2000 makes it uncertain how the labor force and employment has been affected in St. Croix County.

A suggestion of the types of businesses respondents would like to see recruited to the County is provided by Chart 18. Residents were asked their level of agreement regarding types of businesses to pursue as listed in the chart. Seven business categories were listed along with the non-business category of public sector/government. Figure 1.5 shows the percentage that gave each item a "5" or a "4" high priority rating. The results indicated that St. Croix County residents want the County to pursue a variety of business types. Of the seven business types listed, a majority gave the two highest priority ratings to six types of businesses. Three types were grouped together at the top of the priorities: agricultural (75%), high technology industry (75%), and light industry (73%). In addition, a majority, ranging between 61% and 68%, gave a rating of five or four to pursuing manufacturing, service businesses, and retail development. Respondents had split opinions about recruiting tourism-based businesses. While a plurality (49%) gave it a high priority (four or five), 30 percent gave it a priority rating in the middle (3). The only item on the list for which a majority of respondents were not supportive was the group of residents who listed reduction of property taxes as their top priority in a later question.

**Figure 1.5 – High Priority Businesses to Attract**



Source: *St. Croix County Comprehensive Planning Public Opinion Survey Report Results, 2008*

There were the following demographic differences:

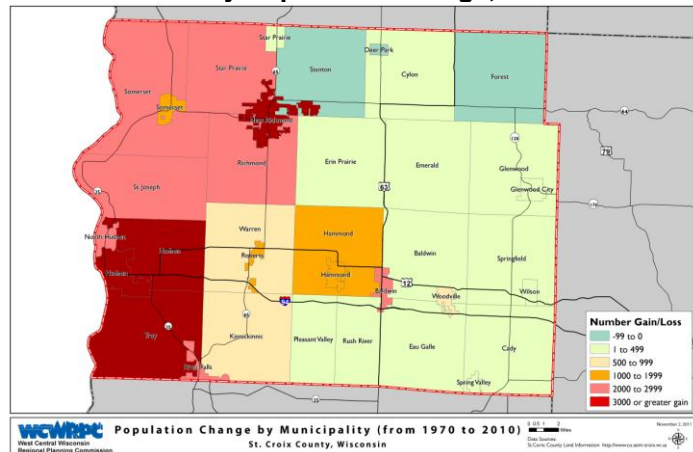
- Agricultural businesses were rated more importantly by residents from the eastern portion of the County.
- Respondents from the western portion of the County more strongly favored high technology industry. Renters gave a higher proportion of “don’t know” responses regarding high technology industry.
- Long term residents were less supportive of tourism development, while residents in the western portion of the County were slightly more supportive than those from the eastern portion.
- Residents from the western portion of the county and city/village residents were more supportive of additional retail development.

## A. Conditions, Forecasts, & Issue Prioritization

### Conditions & Forecasts

- Most of St. Croix County's population growth has occurred on the west side of the County.
- St. Croix County is expected to add 53,000 people by 2030.
- St. Croix County's population is aging and becoming more diverse.
- St. Croix County is expected to add 21,000 new housing units by 2030.
- 31 of 35 municipalities have plans; many plans and ordinances overlap in jurisdiction and contain conflicting policies and regulations.

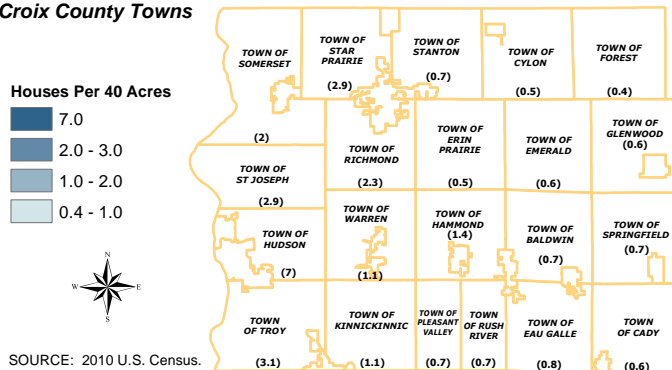
St. Croix County Population Change, 1970-2010



### Top Issues

- Uneven growth in the County has created challenges when developing county wide land use policies.
- Coordinated planning and minimized conflict among adjacent communities.
- Coordinated provision of services and cost sharing among adjacent communities.
- Recruitment of agricultural and high tech industry.
- School districts will be challenged to maintain educational standards in the face of declining budgets.

Housing Units Per 40 Acres - 2010  
St. Croix County Towns



### Implications

- Communities should use coordination and joint planning to promote land-use compatibility, conserve resources, and establish infrastructure linkages and systems. It is important to streamline procedures and review processes with greater emphasis on consistency between communities.
- Intergovernmental cooperation will increase as State, County, and local budgets become more restrictive and partnerships are pursued.
- St. Croix County's population will continue to grow and housing will increase to meet the need. Economic development should occur to provide jobs and secure a high quality of life. County residents will be challenged to meet competing interests.

## Summary

Certain trends become apparent after reviewing the countywide demographic and economic information. Studying these trends and their implications on local quality of life is useful in guiding public decision making. Since 1970, St. Croix County has experienced some of the fastest population growth in the state; however, being part of the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area it is clear its future is inked to the vitality of the region.

Since 1960, there has been an explosion of rural non-farm residents. Indeed, amongst the rural population there has been a transformation from a largely farm population to a rural non-farm population. Significant rural development may be curtailed because of the developing energy situation with a continuing shift occurring in the urban/rural mix, with an increasing percentage of the County's inhabitants living in or near the urban areas.

Since 1960 St. Croix County has seen fairly constant natural increase in population with two periods where in-migration exceeded natural increase (1970-1980 and 1990-2000).

It is clear that the national trend of an aging population is reflected in St. Croix County. Large numbers of people will be reaching retirement age over the next 20 years. While the St. Croix County population will be aging, it will also be changing its racial and ethnic characteristics. The County's Asian and Hispanic populations can be expected to continue to increase significantly.

Overall, the forecasts and trends analyzed here and in Issues and Opportunities –Population & Demographics Vol. 2 reveal that St. Croix County will continue to be vigorous with continued dramatic growth in population, housing and employment, and its communities will face several challenges as a result. These challenges that affect St. Croix County communities will be explored further in the element sections of the plan, both Vol. 1 and Vol. 2. With further analysis of these sections it is hoped that a clear picture of where St. Croix County has been, and is now, will emerge. This has helped the county frame the issues it faces, the changes that are likely to impact the county and the ways it can address those changes.